

Remarks

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and further examination are respectfully requested.

Initially, it is noted that new claims 5-8 have been added.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okabe (US 6,459,285) in view of Tokisue. Claims 2 and 3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Okabe in view of Tokisue and further in view of Zohni (US 6,540,467). Claim 4 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okabe in view of Tokisue and further in view of Zohni and Tanaka (US 5,777,485).

The above-mentioned rejections are respectfully traversed and submitted to be inapplicable to the claims for the following reasons.

Claim 1 is patentable over Okabe, since claim 1 recites a wafer handling checker including, in part, a vacuum pincette having a conductive suction part for operating on a plurality of training operation wafers; and voltage application means for applying a voltage between each electrode of a cassette and the conductive suction part of the vacuum pincette. Okabe fails to disclose or suggest the vacuum pincette as recited in claim 1.

Okabe discloses a burn-in apparatus including an isothermal chamber 11, wafer holders 12, a slot array 13, a controller 14, and bridge lines 15. The wafer holders 12 are adapted to hold semiconductor wafers 16 having semiconductor devices formed thereon. Each of the wafer holders 12 includes a stage board 51, a chuck 52, a vacuum outlet 53, and electrode chips 55. The chuck 52 and the vacuum outlet 53 are adapted so as to keep the semiconductor wafer 16 secured to the stage board 51 during screening. The controller 14 generates a voltage source and a control signal for screening the semiconductor devices on the wafers 16 and supplies them to the semiconductor devices on the wafers 16 via the bridge lines 15 and the electrode chips 55. (See column 4, lines 27-62; column 6, lines 5-15; and Figures 1 and 3C.)

The rejection indicates that the combination of the controller 14 and the bridge lines 15 correspond to the claimed voltage application means and the vacuum outlets 53 correspond to the claimed vacuum pincette. However, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Okabe that the vacuum outlets 53 have a conductive suction part. Further, as discussed above and admitted in the rejection, the vacuum outlets 53 are used to suction the semiconductor wafers 16 to the stage board 51 and are not electrically connected to the bridge lines 15, which supply the source

voltage and the control signal from the controller 14 to the semiconductor devices on the semiconductor wafers 16 via the electrode chips 55. Therefore, while the bridge lines 15 do supply a voltage to the semiconductor devices on the semiconductor wafers 16 via the electrode chips 55, the bridge lines 15 clearly do not apply a voltage between each of the electrode chips 55 and the vacuum outlets 53. As a result, the rejection relies on Tokisue as disclosing these features of claim 1.

Tokisue discloses a holding device for holding an object 1. The holding device includes a hand body 2 having a holder surface 2A on which the object 1 is supported, an electrode 3 located on a bottom surface of the hand body 2 opposite to the holder surface 2A, and a hole 2a. The holding device also includes a spring member 5 connected to the bottom surface of the hand body 2 via an insulating member 11. The spring member 5 is connected to a conductive portion 4 that passes through the hole 2a so as to contact the object 1. The spring member 5 is electrically connected to a voltage device 6 and the electrode 3 can either be electrically connected to the voltage device 6 or ground 10 via a changeover switch 7.

During operation, when the holding device is to hold the object 1, the switch 7 is set such that the electrode 3 is electrically connected to the voltage device 6. By electrically connecting the electrode 3 to the voltage device 6, an electromagnetic force is created between the electrode 3 and the conductive portion 4 which attracts the object 1. As a result of the electromagnetic force, the object 1 is held in place on the holder surface 2A of the hand body 2. On the other hand, when the holding device is to release the object 1, the switch 7 is set such that the electrode 3 is electrically connected to the ground 10. As a result of grounding the electrode 3, the electromagnetic force is no longer present and the object 1 can be removed from the holder surface 2A of the hand body 2. (See column 4, line 39 – column 5, line 11 and Figure 4).

Based on the rejection, it appears that the handling device of Tokisue is being relied upon as disclosing the features of claim 1 that are lacking from Okabe. However, based on the above discussion of Tokisue, it is apparent that the handling device relies on the electromagnetic force created when the electrode 3 is connected to the voltage device 6 to hold the object 1 in place, and not on a vacuum. As a result, Tokisue also fails to disclose or suggest the vacuum pincette having the conductive suction part as recited in claim 1. Therefore, that a voltage is applied between the electrode 3 and the conductive portion 4 still also fails to disclose or suggest the application of a voltage between each electrode of a cassette and the conductive suction part of

the vacuum pincette as recited in claim 1. Additionally, it is noted that it would not have been obvious to combine the any portion of the handling device of Tokisue with the vacuum outlets 53 of Okabe because the two devices operate to hold items in completely different ways (i.e., suction versus magnetic force).

In consideration of the above discussion, Okabe and Tokisue do not, either alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the vacuum pincette having the conductive suction part for operating on the plurality of training operation wafers and the voltage application means for applying the voltage between each electrode of the cassette and the conductive suction part of the vacuum pincette, which features are recited in claim 1. Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to modify or combine the references so as to obtain the invention as recited in claim 1.

As for (1) Zohni and (2) Tanka, these references are relied upon as disclosing (1) display means and decision means, and (2) output means for generating sound, respectively. However, it is apparent that neither of these references discloses or suggests the above-discussed features recited in claim 1.

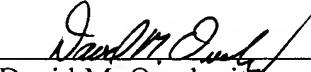
As for claim 5, it is patentable over the references for reasons similar to those set forth above in support of claim 1. That is, claim 5 recites, in part, a vacuum pincette having a conductive suction part for operating on a plurality of training operation wafers and a controller operable to apply a voltage between each electrode of a cassette and the conductive suction part of the vacuum pincette, which features are not disclosed or suggested by the references.

Because of the above-mentioned distinctions, it is believed clear that claims 1-8 are allowable over the references relied upon in the rejections. Furthermore, it is submitted that the distinctions are such that a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention would not have been motivated to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in, or otherwise render obvious, the present invention as recited in claims 1-8. Therefore, it is submitted that claims 1-8 are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that there are issues remaining which must be resolved before allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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